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ABSTRACT

In 1991 Quality University organized its first Office of Institutional Planning and Research within the provost's office. This Office has focused on six major functions: (1) organization and start-up activities (developing collegial support, analyzing information resources, and developing computing resources); (2) administrative information development (creating a database of faculty information and increasing the usefulness of student surveys); (3) external reporting (completing surveys and questionnaires and gathering in-depth information for accrediting agencies); (4) management support (supporting planning and decision making on a scheduled and an ad hoc basis); (5) policy analysis (studying projections of faculty retirement and family income trends); and (6) information technology systems (developing information systems to facilitate completion of projects in the other function areas). Evaluation has been ongoing, with results informing the next step of development. Future activities include selecting a research topic for annual in-depth study, organizing data support for annual reports, and cataloging institutional research resources. The office's needs include staffing for information technology support, clerical support, and computer support, and staff development. (JDD)

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Year One Annual Report and Planning Document

Susan H. Frost
Director, Institutional Planning and Research
Emory University

AIR Forum, May 1993

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In October, 1991 Quality University organized its first centralized Office of Institutional Planning and Research. Formerly various offices in the schools and non-instructional divisions carried out institutional research functions, with the provost's office coordinating centralized research in the schools. Since October 1, 1991, the office has functioned as a division of the provost's office.

The first nine months have been most productive. Typically institutional research on the university level performs at least four major functions: administrative information development, external reporting, management support, and policy analysis (Volkwein, 1991). So far at Quality substantial efforts in all four areas either are completed or are underway. This year two other functions have been central: organizing the office and integrating it into the administrative framework of the university, and developing information technology systems to support future operation. Within this functional framework, the work of the first nine months is presented.

Organization and Start-up Activities

Human resources

On October 1, 1991, the new director assumed responsibility for institutional planning and research at Quality. Initially supported by the staff of the provost's office, now a full-time administrative assistant staffs the office. For a period of eight months a project specialist in the information technology division (ITD) is devoting half time to the computer, systems, and database needs of the office.

In addition to the regular staff, the office enjoys excellent support from the staff of the provost's office. A reference librarian also has facilitated the work of the office by meeting requests for research, often on a same-day basis.

Collegial support

One of the provost's initial charges to the director concerned learning the university structure and developing working relationships with campus colleagues. Since October the director has devoted substantial time to meeting with at least 35 individuals and groups. The provost's charge has proved to be a most valuable way to identify and begin to meet institutional research needs. The meetings have led to strong collegial support for the office and enabled the director to conduct an informal internal scan of the university, thus systematically discovering sources for historical and current information, investigating data and research needs, and

getting a clear view of effectiveness processes in individual divisions and at the central level. On a regular basis the director meets with the following administrative groups: the provost's staff, the enrollment management group, and the information systems advisory committee (ISAC).

In addition to support from campus colleagues, an office of institutional planning and research cannot function effectively without support from the larger higher education community, including colleagues on other campuses and in various government and higher education agencies and news organizations. Since October the director has expanded her professional contacts to include individuals at the Carnegie Foundation (currently the foundation is reclassifying higher education institutions, which they do once each eight to ten years); *U.S. News and World Report*/College Council; *Money* Magazine; *USA Today*; the American Association of University Professors (AAUP); the College and University Personnel Association (CUPA); the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA (the institute conducts the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) freshman survey and the HERI faculty survey); the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS); and the directors of institutional research at other private research universities across the country.

Information resources

Institutional research requires analysis of a broad range of internal historical and current information. Therefore internal resources are critical to effective reporting. To develop these resources the office has begun collections of central-university surveys for the AAUP, CUPA, IPEDS, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Money* Magazine, and *USA Today*; recent annual reports and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) self-study documents of the schools and non-instructional divisions; bulletins and other printed documents published by the schools; and the *Quality University Report*. Archives of the bulletins of the schools, previous annual reports of the schools and non-instructional divisions, the minutes of the Quality University Board of Trustees supplement the collections housed in the office.

Meaningful institutional research concerns not only the university, but also addresses the international, national, and regional climates in which the university exists. This approach to analysis requires extensive use of external resources. To develop these resources, the director has begun collections of information about peer and neighboring universities; publications of government and higher education agencies such as the Department of Education, the National Center of Education Statistics (both free of charge), the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR); the *Chronicle of Higher Education*; *Change* Magazine; and the leading higher education journals. The first step in building a collection of information about other universities was to identify a list of peer institutions. In consultation with the provost and the deans and directors of the university, the director compiled such a list and requested factbooks, annual reports, or other publications from the universities.

The director has undergone extensive orientation to the collection of the library including databases such as Infotrac, Newsbank, and the ERIC system. She has investigated an office connection to ERIC, the primary source for educational abstracts. The connection will be established as soon as it is available through the library.

Computing resources

Microcomputer resources include two Macintosh ci computers (one with modem), one Macintosh Powerbook 140 with fax modem, one Apple Laserwriter, and one Hewlett Packard Deskwriter. Software resources include Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and MacLink Plus. Both office computers are connected to the local area network and to the university's mainframe system.

A portion of the information technology specialist's work this year has involved implementing and facilitating our use of hardware, software, and connections available to the office. She has, for example, made more efficient our work with the Macintosh ci and Powerbook computers, desktop and data sharing procedures, the mainframe, and electronic mail. She also has increased her expertise in Word and Excel, designed numerous macros and other spreadsheet and database tools, and instructed the administrative assistant and the director in their use. She secured the appropriate mainframe and network connections; established a third workstation with mainframe connections to allow her to work on site with the Powerbook; and investigated cpu charges billed in error to our account, arranged for a refund, and obtained the proper rate for the account.

Space

To meet initial space needs, the office occupies a small suite in the administration building. Already the work space is fully utilized and storage space is about 40% occupied. We appreciate the collective effort to secure space in the administration building for the office. The administration building is by far the most effective site on campus for the office.

Administrative Information Development

Reporting and analysis can be only as accurate as the data on which the reports and analyses are based. Although it is not possible or appropriate for an institutional research office to oversee all databases that form the infrastructure of a university, institutional research takes part in data management and, at times, supervises the creation of data systems. This year the office has undertaken both activities, especially regarding the university faculty.

Faculty information

A valid, reliable, flexible, and accessible faculty database was identified as a campus-wide need soon after the office was organized. The provost's office began work on the database when the staff collected demographic, academic, and salary faculty data from the 1990-91 annual reports of the schools and constructed Excel spreadsheets to house the information. This work enabled the office to complete

external surveys, report faculty information to SACS self-study committees, and support decision making throughout the year.

This year we have increased the flexibility of the data by converting the spreadsheets to a database customized to answer to our most frequently-asked questions. Using the faculty information sections of the 1991-1992 annual reports, the database will be extended and used throughout the coming academic year on almost a daily basis. In addition each school will receive a paper and computer file copy of two years of faculty information in the fall. We are in the process of adding Social Security numbers to allow comparison of our micro-based data with data in the Human Resources System, eliminate the possibility of confusing individuals with the same name, and increase security. When the addition is complete, selected printed lists will show only Social Security numbers, not names.

To make additional improvements, the director is working with the associate director of human resources, the director of business and finance for the school of medicine, and the information technology specialist and a team from ITD to design a faculty database for campus use. The associate director of human resources has assumed responsibility for auditing and correcting faculty information in the human resource system, and we anticipate assisting him by making available the information we have collected. We anticipate that the final product will be available to institutional research as well as to the academic divisions and others who use micro-based faculty information at this time. A university-wide information system should eliminate the reporting of non-standard information and meet the needs of groups such as the new International Council. The council needs demographic information on select groups of faculty. To date such groups collect data independently, thereby proliferating the reporting of non-standard faculty statistics.

A potential source of information about the Quality faculty is available because Quality participated in a new study being conducted by the Carnegie Foundation. Last fall the university joined a national pool of faculty completing the survey. Quality's participation was coordinated through the Office of Institutional Planning and Research. By design a small sample of faculty were selected to participate in the national survey, but the Carnegie Foundation has given permission for the instrument to be used locally at our discretion.

CIRP Freshman Survey

Since 1966 Quality students have completed the annual CIRP freshman survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. The survey provides a wealth of information about beginning students and their families, financial resources, and academic and career aspirations. Each year UCLA researchers compare the responses of Quality freshmen to the responses of over 200,000 other freshmen and weight the data to reflect the opinions of freshmen at all private universities, all universities, and all colleges and universities in the United States. The surveys have provided longitudinal data for several of our analyses this year.

To increase the usefulness of the CIRP Survey, in 1992 freshmen will respond to ten questions designed by the director, the directors of admission and financial aid, and representatives of Quality College (the undergraduate college of the university). The institutional questions will become an ongoing part of the survey and will provide expanded longitudinal information about Quality freshmen. As has been done this year, the director can request special analyses from UCLA comparing the responses Quality freshmen to the responses of freshmen from groups of other institutions we select.

HEDS Senior Survey

In Fall, 1991 Quality College adopted the HEDS Senior Survey as a method of learning about the attitudes and college experiences of graduating seniors. The Office of Institutional Planning and Research informed the College office of the survey opportunity, ordered the instruments, and will receive the analysis from HEDS. The surveys were distributed through the office of the dean of the College. At this time the completed surveys are being analyzed by the HEDS staff. The College expects to continue using the survey to investigate the effectiveness of the educational and student services programs.

External Reporting

External reporting includes activities such as completing surveys and questionnaires for government agencies, education associations, and news organizations and responding to more in-depth requirements for information from, for example, accrediting agencies. These activities are routes through which universities are presented to the public. This year the office met many requests from external associations and organizations. In fact, the majority of our time has been spent preparing for the ten-year reaccrediting visit of SACS.

Reaccreditation of the university

In March, 1993 a visiting committee from SACS will review all programs of the university as part of the reaccreditation process. Soon after beginning work at Quality the director met with the SACS Committee on Institutional Effectiveness to discuss effectiveness processes at the university. In preparation for the meeting she identified numerous examples of effectiveness activities described in the 1989-90 Annual Report of the President. Following the meeting the committee requested that she develop and conduct three sessions of a workshop for chairpersons and members of the school self-studies who were charged with addressing effectiveness issues. The goal of the workshop was to clarify the SACS criteria on effectiveness and help committee members document effectiveness activities in their divisions. Through this process the Effectiveness Committee sought to enhance the level of rigor with which the school and non-instructional division self-study committees addressed effectiveness issues.

In November the director joined the Effectiveness Committee and with the group planned methods to assess effectiveness activities in the schools and non-instructional divisions. To facilitate the analysis, she prepared a document for committee members to use when reviewing the self-study documents of the schools

and non-instructional divisions and reporting their findings to the committee. After committee members reviewed the reports and completed the documents, the director used the documents to write the section of the chapter on effectiveness in the schools and non-instructional divisions and the section on institutional research.

In February, the director assumed responsibility for serving as Principal Administrative Liaison (PAL) to the SACS committee on Undergraduate Education. At this time the committee had not begun work on the undergraduate education chapter. The director and the new chair of the committee reconvened the committee and began work on the chapter. Written jointly by the committee and edited by the chair and the director, the final draft of the chapter was delivered to the self-study director in July.

In addition to drafting portions of the effectiveness and undergraduate education chapters of the self-study report, the director supplied empirical information on the Quality faculty to the chair of the committee charged with writing the chapter on faculty. The director tabulated the required school and university totals for the non-medical divisions, secured equivalent information from the medical school, and constructed the requested tables.

Related indirectly to external reporting, the director supplies information to other university offices for use in preparing news releases, grant proposals, and other documents requiring university-level empirical information. As the campus becomes accustomed to seeking such information from the Office of Institutional Planning and Research, we expect to see a greater degree of uniformity in the empirical descriptors of Quality that are used internally and released to the public. Although staffing does not allow for all university-level information to be gathered by our office, by acting as a clearing house we will achieve increasing levels of consistency.

Major surveys and questionnaires

The office has completed or coordinated completion of seven major surveys or questionnaires this year. Completed documents went to the following associations, governmental agencies, or news organizations:

American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
IPEDS - the director completed the Institutional Characteristics Survey and Salaries, Tenure, and Fringe Benefits of Full-time Instructional Faculty Survey and assumed responsibility for coordinating completion of the other sections.
College and University Personnel Association (CUPA)
SACS Institutional Profile - the yearly update on academic programs and faculty credentials
USA Today
Money Magazine/Orchard House Supplemental Survey
US News and World Report Annual Rankings of America's Best Colleges

Throughout this process the office worked to standardize responses and return the surveys in a timely manner. The effort would not have been successful without the contributions of many offices, especially the offices of the provost, the vice provost for academic and enrollment planning, the associate vice president for budgeting, admission, Quality College, financial aid, and the registrar.

Document presenting Quality to an external audience

In November the executive vice president requested that an extensive document be prepared to present a profile of the university to an external audience To meet this request the director assembled data and wrote analyses of the following areas:

Highlights of Research and Achievement in Graduate Education
Financial Change at Quality, 1986-87 to 1990-91
Quality University: Student Profile
Quality University: Endowment Market Value 1986-1991
Quality and Private Universities: Value of Endowment
FACT FILE: Value of 50 Endowments on June 30, 1990 (edit of scan from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*)
College and University Endowments over $100-Million, 1990 (edit of scan from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*)
Quality University: Sponsored Research Activities
Quality and Private Universities: Federal Obligations FY 89
Quality and Private Universities: Foundation Support 1989-1990
The 37 Institutions that Received 50 Per Cent of Foundation Support in 1989-90 (edit of scan from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*)
Graduate and Professional Degrees Offered
Quality University: Graduate School Enrollment
Quality University: PhDs Awarded Annually
Quality and Private Universities: Graduate and Professional School Enrollment 1989
Quality and Private Universities: PhDs Awarded 1989
Quality University: GRE Scores of Graduate Students 1989
Enrollment and Degrees Awarded, 1986-87 to 1990-91
Quality and Private Universities: Total Library Expenditures 1989-1990
Holdings of University Research Libraries in the United States and Canada 1989-90
Quality University: Recent Contributions to Society through Scholarship and Research
Abbreviated vitas of faculty holding named chairs

Survey on surveys

Responding to campus-wide concern about the cumulative time and effort that many offices invest in external reporting, the director is working to assess survey completion activities across the campus. The goal of this effort is to measure university-wide involvement in survey completion. At present the director acts as coordinator for surveys completed by more than one office. Working with the provost, she developed an institutional response to the many requests for

information the university declines to grant. When information is available about survey completion patterns on campus, the institutional research staff will work to reduce duplication of effort, decrease time spent on surveys that have little or no value to the university, and respond in some way to all requests for data.

Management Support

Offices of institutional planning and research support planning and decision making both on a scheduled and an ad hoc basis. This year we have performed in both modes, producing a number of documents for various administrative audiences. Many analyses have become components of larger documents. The following is a list of documents and their component parts.

- Analysis of AAUP Faculty Salary and Compensation Survey Information
  - AAUP Section I: Number, Salaries, Tenure Status, 9-month, combined gender, male, and female (3 tables)
  - AAUP Section I: Number, Salaries, Tenure Status, 12-month, combined gender, male, and female (3 tables)
  - AAUP Section III: Increase for Continuing Faculty, 9-month, combined gender, male, and female (3 tables)
  - AAUP Section III: Increase for Continuing Faculty, 12-month, combined gender, male, and female (3 tables)
- *The Professoriate: A Profile*, prepared for the Quality University Board of Trustees, April Retreat, 1992
  - The Professoriate: A Profile (summary of national and Quality University trends affecting faculty)
  - Quality University: Growth in Faculty Compensation by Rank
  - Quality University: Faculty Percentage by Rank of Women and Minorities, 1991-1992
  - Quality University: Faculty Holding Tenure and Tenure Track Appointment
  - Percent of Faculty to Reach Age 65 by the Year 2000 by School and Rank
  - College Enrollment Highlights: The National Picture 1991-1992
  - Quality College Freshman Profile 1980-1991
  - Quality College Student Profile 1980-1991
  - Quality College Financial Aid Profile 1980-1991
  - Quality College Faculty-Student Ratios
- Other April Retreat Information
  - Quality University Faculty Salary (analysis and table)
  - Faculty/Student Ratio 1980-1991 (analysis and table)
  - Quality College Student Profile 1980-1991 (analysis and table)
  - College Enrollment Projections 1991-2002 (analysis and table)
- The Quality Board of Trustees Meeting, May, 1992
  - Quality University: Faculty Profile Summary of Non-Medical Units 1991-1992

Quality University: Faculty Profile School of Medicine 1991-1992
Quality University: Faculty Holding Tenure and Tenure Track Appointments 1991-1992
Quality University Full-time Faculty by Rank: Women and Minorities 1991-1992
Quality University: Full-time Instructional Faculty Years of Service 1991-1992

Trends in Family Income
Trends in Income of Quality College Freshmen 1980-1991 (analysis)
Quality Tuition and Family Income 1980-1991
Self-reported Income of Quality College Freshmen 1986-1991
Self-reported Income of Quality College Freshmen 1980-1991

Comparative Information
Quality Comparisons 1945 and 1991

Tables for the SACS Chapter in Institutional Effectiveness
Departmental Reviews in the Arts and Sciences
Selected Examples of Institutional Research Activities within the Schools and Colleges of Quality University

Quality University: Selected Highlights of Excellence and Achievement (ongoing compendium of university highlights)

These documents represent efforts to not only report correct and timely information about Quality, but to cast the information an appropriate context and with regard to internal and external issues.

Often the quality of analysis depends on having knowledge of peer institutions and of the work of colleagues around the country. To ensure depth of analysis the director is an active member of the Association for Institutional Research and the Association for the Study of Higher Education. She attends and presents at their national meetings. Also she has been named Quality's primary representative to HEDS. HEDS offers Quality and other member institutions opportunities to share IPEDS and AAUP data soon after the reports are completed and to participate in other data collection as desired. This year our participation has increased to included the following:

Undergraduate Admission Fall 1991
IPEDS Finance FY 1991
IPEDS Fall Enrollment FY 1991
IPEDS Completions 1990-91
1992 Tuition and Fees
1992 Graduation and Retention
1991-92 Faculty Salary Data Exchange (AAUP Data Exchange)
Senior Survey 1992

We declined to complete the following:

Undergraduate Admission Cost 1991-92

We lacked sufficient information to complete the following:

Fall 1991, FTE Calculations and Undergraduate Student: Faculty Rations (university-wide faculty FTE not available) Fall 1991

HEDS sponsored several other data collection activities during the year in which Quality did not participate.

As noted previously, the Senior Survey will become an annual activity in the College. Although the number of students completing the survey in 1992 was low (9.4%), the director and the dean are working together to increase student participation in coming years.

In July the director attended the summer meeting of HEDS and chaired the research university breakout session. Interaction with university representatives proved quite valuable. In presentations on financial aid and fringe benefit control she learned where peer institutions stand on issues that are under discussion at Quality. Top agenda items emerging from the university breakout session concerned expanding the research university membership and encouraging full participation of university members.

Policy Analysis

Policy analysis supports planning and evaluation. Usually considered to be a higher-order institutional research function, policy analyses can range from retirement forecasting to assessment of educational outcomes. This year with the guidance of the provost the office has completed the following analyses:

Projection of Faculty Retirement
- Quality University: Faculty Retirement Projection (analysis and table)

Quality Tuition and Family Income 1980-1991

Analysis of Family Income Trends
- Trends in Family Income of College Freshmen: Selected Georgia Schools 1985-1991 (table and figure)
- Trends in Family Income of College Freshmen: Quality College of Quality University 1985-1991 (table and figure)

The effectiveness of the function depends on reliable and accessible data and, in part, flows from the success of the administrative information development function. As the office matures, the policy analysis function should expand.

Information Technology Systems

Perhaps the most energizing function of the office is developing parallel to the four traditional functions of institutional research. To most effectively serve the university with the fiscal resources available to us, the office must maximize human and technological resources by establishing information systems to logically manage, analyze, store, file, and retrieve information. Therefore a goal of each

project is to design ways to systemize its completion in the future. Although this effort will be ongoing, in recent months exciting progress has been made.

Since January the staff and the director have consulted with many individuals in the Information Technology Division as well as with experts outside the Quality community to develop and put in place such systems. The process began last year when the director assumed responsibility for completing the AAUP survey and sections of the IPEDS survey. While assembling and analyzing information for the report, she was also planning ways to systemize the process in the future. As a result, the Excel spreadsheets that housed faculty data have been converted into databases and linked to tables that "read" the data and reflect answers to the questions in the surveys. To test the accuracy of the data and of the analytical processes the information technology specialist and the administrative assistant are using the new methods to recreate answers to the surveys completed last fall. We anticipate that this new system will enable us to complete the fall surveys in less time and with greater degrees of accuracy and consistency.

Another step in data management involves selecting and implementing a statistical software package. With the help of Academic Computing personnel, the director and staff have investigated several mainframe and micro packages and adopted SYSTAT, a microbased package that utilizes the capabilities of the Macintosh and allows for sophisticated graphical interpretation of results. At this time the information technology specialist is learning SYSTAT and working with the director to apply it to our needs. Then she will instruct the director and the administrative assistant in procedures for our most efficient use.

Another project in progress concerns designing a system to document and file information coming into the office and items sent out by us. The large volume of work produced this year and the evolutionary nature of many of our projects mandate our use of effective tracking and retrieval processes. Working with the director, the staff has designed a computer system to complete this task and begun entering all existing documents into the system. We expect the system to save time, increase efficiently, and become more sophisticated with use.

These are just a few examples of our progress with information systems. Our growing sophistication in this area is due to the information technology specialist's expertise and to the willingness of the staff to contribute to designs for accomplishing tasks more effectively in the future.

Evaluation of First-Year Activities

In the first-year atmosphere of constant growth, evaluation has been ongoing, with results informing the next step of development. After seven weeks of operation, the provost and the director evaluated progress in an extended planning meeting. Following the meeting the director outlined the direction the office would take in the coming months. Following the evaluation, a full time support position was approved.

In January, 1992 space needs were evaluated, and space was expanded from a one-room office to a three-room suite. To date the move is complete, with some of the furnishings still on order.

Also in January the director submitted a budget proposal to the provost. Funds for the office were approved during the regular budget cycle and, to a great extent, drive planning for next year.

In June, 1992 the office held the first day-long evaluation and planning retreat. Institutional planning and research activities were reviewed, as was the performance of the staff. The meeting resulted in the director and each staff member identifying objectives to be completed by September, when the information technology project specialist's time with the office will be redefined. To date progress on achieving these objectives is good.

At this writing plans for an annual evaluation procedure are underway. Before a process is adopted, the first-year activities will be evaluated by the provost and the vice provost's. This evaluation will take place in early fall and will utilize this document as well as a prototypic institutional research report to be completed by the director. One objective of the process will be to define annual evaluation procedures for future years.

Future Activities

Near term

Projects expected to be completed by September 1, 1992 include:

- Distribution of the Survey on Surveys
- Data entry in the micro-based faculty database of the 1992-93 academic year information, including social security numbers
- Design of method to store the micro-based faculty database, give access to appropriate staff, guarantee security, and protect the source data from change during analysis
- Staff training in advanced topics for Word and Excel
- Design and implement a filing and retrieval system for the office
- Design of mainframe catalog of resources available in the office for university-wide use
- Complete evaluation of SYSTAT and begin training
- Design and implement a method for tracking time on projects

Other projects in progress include:

- Highlights of Excellence and Achievement Document
- Designing a way to store and access items of the Highlights document according to category, and to produce different versions of the document as requested
- Analysis of results of the Survey on Surveys
- Work on a shared faculty database
- Continue training in SYSTAT

Updating to Word 5.0 and Excel 4.0, both of which offer numerous improvements to our current methods
Clean-up of 1992-93 micro-based faculty data to prepare for fall survey reporting
Return clean versions of the data to schools and meet with designees of the deans to facilitate use
Complete preparation of the prototypic report on faculty
Evaluation of office
Complete plans for ongoing evaluation of the office

Goals and new activities

The office has identified a number of goals and new activities for the coming year. The following list is in addition to the ongoing work of the office:

Select a 1992-92 research topic
Organize a group of data suppliers to discuss ways to facilitate the annual report process for schools and non-instructional divisions
Catalog the office resources and distribute via Profs and campus mail
Expand the collection of data on peer institutions
Increase the usefulness of HEDS membership. Distribute information received form HEDS to appropriate users on campus
Systemize reporting procedures where possible
Prepare continually for next cycle of reporting
Contribute to work on a shared faculty database
Identify faculty reports to be updated routinely and use the faculty database to update 1991-92 reports
Increase the awareness of the university of the activities and resources of the office
Develop a uniform "look" for products of the office

To maintain our present level of activity and accomplish these goals the following new activities are described in detail.

Select a research topic

As this year has shown, substantial effort goes to meeting requests for comprehensive information. Often these requests have short deadlines; require extensive institutional history as well as large amounts of current information about Quality, peer institutions, and global higher education issues; and result in hurried preparation and distribution. Ad hoc requests of this nature are inevitable. To prepare for them institutional research offices must gather, catalog, and store large amounts of data from a variety of sources. To conduct planned and ongoing study of the university and thus reduce the need for large ad hoc, the following proposal is offered.

In 1991-92 most in-depth reporting involved faculty. Faculty issues provided a theme for many meeting throughout the year, for example, fall and spring meetings of the Board of Trustees, the April Retreat of the Board of Trustees, and

numerous internal committee sessions. Also the Quality faculty was the topic of various addresses to both internal and external audiences. Our work on this topic has provided a strong empirical base on which to build in future years. The research will be organized into a prototypic institutional research report, and empirical information will be updated each year.

Similarly, a research topic could be selected next year for in-depth study. The topic could become the year's theme for presentations to the Board of Trustees and others, much as faculty issues occupied this year's agendas, and provide another empirical base for ongoing analysis. A logical choice for 1992-93 is the undergraduate student population, with particular emphasis on enrollment issues. In 1996 the traditional-age population is expected to begin increasing, with growth due largely to increasing numbers of minority students. The topic is most timely and considerable work on enrollment issues is underway. Within this framework the research would expand to include national and peer-institution trends. As is being done this year with the accumulated faculty data, the body of student information could be organized into a comprehensive report at year's end. If the process proves helpful, a new research topic could be selected for the following year.

Organize data support for the annual report cycle

This year the office assumed responsibility preparing requests for annual reports from the schools and non-instructional divisions. Calls for data were much the same as last year's, with requests for longitudinal data being deleted. The provost collected longitudinal data last year. This year we are building on her base.

To facilitate collecting new faculty data, tables were constructed from the information collected last year. The schools received copies along with the request to proof read the information and add new information. All schools received paper copy and some schools took advantage of our offer to supply them with computer files. For all schools we will merge the information they return with other elements of the faculty database and return paper and computer file copies for their use throughout the year. Each school will receive data on its faculty only.

During the year we plan to work with offices who supply data to the schools and non-instructional divisions to design additional procedures for facilitating the annual report process. We especially hope to eliminate duplicate efforts to collect information and construct tables. We will ask the deans, associate deans, business managers, and others in the schools how institutional research and other central collection points might assist them in the annual report process and take their responses back to the data suppliers. We anticipate that a joint memo explaining the services of data suppliers will accompany the call for annual reports next year.

Catalog institutional research resources

To function effectively institutional research offices must collect information from external sources such as peer institutions and government, education, and news agencies. We have begun a collection and now we are designing ways to share the information with others on campus. The information technology project specialist is investigating ways to catalog our external resources on the

mainframe and make the list available through Profs and through campus mail. We envision developing a newsletter that will go out via network and mail to update the resource list and make known other services of the office. When a body of research on Quality is available for general distribution, a second list will be established.

Build the collection of data on peer institutions

The office will continue to identify sources and collect of data from peer institutions. We will continue to monitor third party providers such as CIRP and CUPA, inform appropriate constituencies of their products and services, and order upon request.

Increase the usefulness of HEDS membership

The office will work to maximize the usefulness of HEDS membership. With recent additions to the membership, we will work this year to take full advantage of belonging to the consortium. So far it has been impossible to find time to analyze and disseminate the reports we receive from HEDS. In the coming year the office will make available to appropriate users the information from HEDS.

Needs

Staffing is the primary need of the office. The following is a breakdown of staffing patterns and critical needs.

Information technology support

As explained in this report, the half-time services of the information technology project specialist have contributed in immeasurable ways to the progress of the office, to the level of sophistication with which we manage data, and to our plans for future progress. Our level of staffing makes essential the time-saving devices she has implemented. Even so, the process of identifying and meeting our computer and information system needs is only beginning. Therefore we request that the specialist be reassigned one-half time to the office. Her knowledge of our procedures and requirements, and the level of expertise she brings to her work are invaluable resources.

Clerical support

The majority of the time of the administrative assistant is spent completing clerical chores such as typing, copying, answering the phone, and filing. She typically works 48 to 54 hours in the office, and clerical duties occupy time that the administrative assistant could best spend on data entry, manipulation, and display. To date staff in the provost's office have spent 42 hours working on SACS-related materials, the Highlights document, and other large word-processing projects. Without their help, our progress would have been impossible. Because the clerical overload is constant, a job description has been developed. The duties are unrelated to faculty data or to other confidential topics, so a student with appropriate skills could fill the position. When the position is filled the administrative assistant will

continue to complete all work, including copying and distribution, of faculty database materials and other confidential documents. The addition of this position will allow the administrative assistant's work load to assume normal proportions and enable her to use her computer skills, expand her expertise, and assist the director to a greater degree.

After investigating the College Work Study Program, it is our plan to hire a work-study student for ten to twelve hours per week during the academic year to-fill this position. Funds for work-study were cut from our budget proposal but the need is so great that diverting operational funds for this purpose (about $500 - $600 per academic year) is justified.

Computer support

Using the Mac Powerbook (a notebook computer), we have established a third workstation in the office. This configuration provides space for the information technology specialist and allows to her accelerate our progress by identifying our needs on-site. This configuration, however, is not appropriate for a regular part-time employee or work-study student. The keyboard on the computer is compressed and not designed for office typing. A less powerful Mac than the Mac ci computers in the office would be a viable choice for a third workstation. Funds for this equipment were cut from the budget. The Powerbook will be used until funds or equipment are available.

Staff development

The following training activities are expected to be completed this year:

Focus training (adm asst)
Lexus-Nexus training (adm asst)
SYSTAT training (all)
Editing and Proofreading (adm asst- an workshop offered on campus)
Advanced Word (adm asst)

Systems additions and upgrades

The following systems or computer updates have been adopted for use in the office:

SYSTAT - awaiting in-site license for Quality
New versions of Microsoft Word and Excel - awaiting adoption of upgrades by the provost's office

Summary

The first ten months of institutional planning and research at Quality have been both exciting and productive. Organization of the office is proceeding smoothly, we are performing in all functional areas of traditional institutional research, and designing ways to work smarter in the future. During the coming year we will systemize a number of activities, repeat data collection and analysis for

longitudinal research, and begin other projects to carry forward with administrative information development, external reporting, management support, and policy analysis. In addition, we will support the SACS self-study process to its conclusion and look forward to a positive and helpful review from the visiting committee.

This year's progress is due to the vision and support of the provost. Her leadership, guidance, and willingness to seek fiscal support on our behalf are underpinnings of our progress. Also the support of the entire provost's staff and of data providers such as the offices of admission, financial aid, and the registrar has been invaluable. To be effective, institutional planning and research must be a collaborative effort. Certainly this is the case at Quality.

This year's progress should be surpassed next year. Efficiency should increase when some efforts are repeated, for example some survey completion will be more routine and less time consuming. Also as SACS activities require less time, new projects designed to meet the internal needs of the university can emerge.

Reference

Volkwein, J.F. (1991). Office of Institutional Research: Planning Memorandum. State University of New York - Albany. Unpublished Document.